"Springs out of Non-violence"

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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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NEW VOLUME

In ordinary course the end of the year of the *Harijan* papers would have synchronized with the anniversary day of Gandhiji. But it will be remembered that the papers suspended publication for a few weeks after the commencement of its new year. The result is that the new volume of these papers begins from the present issue.

While I have received during the year several encouraging letters in appreciation of my effort, I regret to report that the circulation of all the editions has considerably fallen during my editorship. Even though they could not be expected to attain the height of Gandhiji's time, the fall is sufficiently indicative of several factors — one of them being my own limitations. A modern editor needs all-round knowledge and scholarship in scores of subjects as also literary and artistic attainments, besides a perfect identification with Gandhiji, the causes which he stood for, and the spirit in which he stood for them. I can claim none of these qualifications, except perhaps the last to a certain degree, and a lifelong habit of plodding and persevering to the extent of my capacity. That might win sympathy and praise from some but cannot attract many. The defect can be remedied if co-workers and colleagues of Gandhiji supplement my efforts to a greater degree than even what they did in Gandhiji's time.

Wardha, 25-2-'49 K. G. MASHRUWALA

"Why Prohibition?"

Dr. H. C. Mookerjee, Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly, has been a great worker in the cause of Prohibition and has studied the subject from all sides. In 1941, he had addressed meetings at Ahmedabad on this subject in company with Shri Mahadev Desai. The latter requested him to put the result of his studies in the form of a manual for the use of social workers as well as the general public. The book is an outcome of that conversation. It is full of useful information and will considerably add to the knowledge of all those who try to wean drinkers from that injurious habit. The book has been published by the Book House, 15 College Square, Calcutta, and is priced at Rs. 4. The author's share of the profits will be contributed to the Gandhi Memorial Fund.

I hope the book will be translated in due course in the various provincial languages also.

21-2-'49 K. G. M.

CONFESS OUR MISTAKES

Many people have spoken about the great sacrifice of Gandhiji. The world has admitted Mahatma Gandhi as the greatest apostle of peace and love. But how many, even in India have followed his example and teachings?

The time has come when we should search our own hearts and realize our position. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to give his life for the good of humanity. But have we benefited ourselves by his martyrdom?

It is high time we realized our shortcomings. It will be a great blunder for us if we do not frankly confess our mistakes. I shall candidly tell you that the present pattern of India was not the dream of Gandhiji. We could not translate his desires, because we did not proceed according to his ideals. Today we realize that the wellbeing, peace and prosperity of India cannot be achieved in any other way than by the methods and approach of Mahatma Gandhi. We can still correct ourselves and build a happy India.

Let there be harmony and friendliness among Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who should all strive for the common good of India. And that will be the real homage to the memory of our nation's father.

(*From* Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's *speech at Rajghat on* 12-2-'49)

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CONGRESS AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORKERS

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Thus the duty of giving practical shape to Gandhiji's idea of Lok Sevak Sangh naturally devolves on the constructive workers because it is they who have received the precious heritage of Gandhiji, viz. his conception of selfless and detached life of service to the people. And therefore, it was in the fitness of things that immediately after Gandhiji's tragic death constructive workers from all over India met in a conference at Sevagram and resolved to form a Sarvodaya Samaj whose object would be to strive towards a society based on truth and non-violence in which there would be no distinction of caste or creed, no opportunity for exploitation and which would afford full scope for development both for individuals as well as groups. It was also decided at Sevagram that Gandhiji's idea of merging the existing All India constructive organizations into one organization should be given effect to as expeditiously as possible and it was hoped that this new body would become the executive of the Sarvodaya Samaj. Happily a machinery has been evolved to co-ordinate the different activities carried on by the different organizations. The Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh consists of the representatives of the present constructive organizations and there is a provision in its constitution whereby representatives of any future organization with similar objectives can be included in it with the same status.

How will the constructive workers start on their new mission? Will they maintain their old ties with the Congress and strengthen them by further service? Will the Congress and the constructive workers be complementary to each other? If the Sevagram conference is any pointer, then the answer is yes. And that is as it ought to be. The members of the Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh or the constructive workers may not and need not concern themselves with day to day politics or parliamentary activities but they cannot remain unconcerned about politics. If they do, they do it at their peril. They are essentially revolutionaries and not reformists; and a revolutionary, especially a non-violent revolutionary should keep aloof from power politics but never from politics as such or from political power. He himself may refuse to share it but as long as a Stateless society is not established and people have not begun to regulate their social relations and affairs by dharma instead of by man-made law or rule, the non-violent revolutionary will have to create and use political power. If the Master's life teaches us any lesson, it is that Truth or God cannot be realized outside society and therefore, a seeker after truth has to deal with all the facets of social life.

In the present day world, leaving aside the totalitarian State, even in the so-called democratic State there is a centripetal tendency and behind the democratic facade really an oligarchy rules. Besides, in the modern age democracy has not only to plan but plan for war; and war-planning has necessarily to be comprehensive and centralized. Never before in its chequered history has the State embraced the entire society and controlled the life of the citizen in all its aspects as it does today. The twentieth century democracy does not believe in the maxim: "That government is the best which governs the least". Therefore a non-violent social revolutionary cannot afford to be indifferent to the State or the government. The Lok Sevak Sangh according to Gandhiji was to be a body of servants who derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and selflessly rendered to their master, the people of India. His idea was that the worker or servant must educate every man and woman who is either an actual or potential voter. Through service rendered to the voters in various ways the worker can and will control and mould the State thus leading to the establishment of a true socio-economic democracy. The Sarvodaya Samaj for which the worker of the Lok Sevak Sangh will be working is a higher goal but at the present level of human development social democracy is the necessary step in that direction.

The resolution of the Jaipur Congress entitled *The Message* says: "Political freedom having been attained through non-violent action under the leadership of Gandhiji, the National Congress has now to labour for the attainment of social and economic freedom so that progress and equal opportunity may come to all the people of India without any distinction of race or religion." This is the goal which the Congress has now set for itself. But more important than the end is the means. The Congress has again pledged its word to the nation at Jaipur that it will work for its goal in the light of the life-giving message of Gandhiji. That distinguishes the Congress from the socialists and the communists. Their fundamental approach towards the national and world problems is Marxian while that of the Congress is Gandhian. And this is quite natural, for he fashioned it and gave it life. As long as the Congress remains faithful to his teachings and works for the goal that he has set not only for the people of India but for all humanity, the constructive workers in general and the *sevaks* of the Sarvodaya Samaj and the members of the Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh in particular need not go in for any new political organization. They can continue to serve the people in political matters through the Congress.

The Congress in its turn, if it is not to be reduced to the position of a mere political convention or a conference where official policies and programme are explained and endorsed but continue to serve the people of India and humanity in the light of the message of Gandhiji, must remain a revolutionary organization as before. Having won political democracy it must now work to extend

it to the social and economic fields. Mere right to vote even on the basis of adult franchise is not real democracy. Under such a democracy the people are only sovereign *de jure*. It is the representatives who are the masters *de facto*. True democracy does not mean the right to delegate power to the representatives but the right and opportunity to administer directly one's own affairs. This is only possible if there is decentralization of power and production. That alone will give the common man the opportunity to act and the power to discriminate. The present day parliamentary democracy as it has evolved in the West is manifesting opposite tendencies and therefore, there is very little possibility under it for the common man to come into his own.

Gandhiji has shown the way. He has taught that service should be directed more specially towards promoting unity and goodwill among all the people of India, abolishing distinctions based on class or religion and working for a classless democratic society in a peaceful manner. His insistence was on truth and non-violence. For the Congress that wants to follow the path shown by him, 'peaceful and legitimate' must mean the same thing. If the Congress is to achieve the goal set by him, then it must give a central place to constructive work in its social reconstruction programme. The various constructive organizations that are already there and those which may be formed in the future must become an organic part of it. The Congress must adopt a plan of decentralized production which should form part of the permanent economy of the country. It must give special attention to the rapid development of cottage and small-scale industries and it must aim at national and regional economic self-sufficiency at least in the essentials of life. It should hold a similar aim in the political field. *The Message* that the Jaipur Congress gave was the message of Gandhiji. It was at Jaipur that the Sarvodaya Exhibition, unique of its kind, was held along with the Congress session. It has blazed the trail. The Congress and the constructive workers must unite and work shoulder to shoulder to achieve the cherished goal of a classless society through peaceful means.

This alone will save the Congress from being turned into a mere political convention to give assent to what is already done by those in charge of the Government. For that way lies its disintegration. If we are to save India, we must stop this rot. The Congress must live up to its tradition of service. All that is idealistic and revolutionary must be saved and organized. This will not be possible without the co-operation of the constructive workers. Gandhiji had made the Congress his powerful instrument for making India free. The duty of forging it into a new instrument for establishing in India a casteless and classless society or a Sarvodaya Samaj now devolves on the constructive workers. They must begin afresh. It is a herculean task. Let us hope that when they meet in conference next March they will devise ways and means of fulfilling it in a manner worthy of Gandhiji.

SHANKARRAO DEV

GANDHIJI'S BIOGRAPHY

Shri Pyarelal, who is engaged in preparing Gandhiji's biography, is at present staying in the Harijan Colony, Kingsway, Delhi as, in the course of his work, there will be need for frequent reference to Gandhiji's colleagues who are in Delhi.

The biography has been planned in five parts. The first part will cover the early period of Gandhiji's life including his sojourn in England and South Africa up to his return to India.

The second part will cover the period of his probation in India and the earlier Satyagraha struggles in Champaran and Kheda.

The third part will cover the tumultuous period from 1919 to 1933 coinciding with the great Khilafat and Non-co-operation struggles.

The fourth part will cover the period of his stay in Wardha and Sevagram terminating with the outbreak of the second World War.

The fifth part, at which Shri Pyarelal is at present working, will cover the last phase of Gandhiji's life. It will perhaps be the longest and the most momentous part, covering as it will, the Quit India struggle, twentyone months' detention in the Agakhan Palace, the Cripps' and the Cabinet Missions, and the 'Do or Die' missions in Noakhali, Bihar and finally in Delhi. The collection and sifting of the material on Gandhiji's work in Noakhali and Bihar is at present approaching completion.

The idea in working from the end backwards is to take up more recent happenings first, before they grow stale.

The order of publication of the various parts and whether they would be published simultaneously or separately will be decided later.

"Nai Talim, Sevagram"

A year ago a representative from *The Times of India* came to Sevagram and took a few photographs of the activities of the educational community. These photographs were later published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, under the title *Better Living for India*. Some friends expressed a wish to see these photographs together as a complete picture of *Nai Talim* in all its aspects.

We have, therefore, published these pictures with short explanatory notes. We hope it may prove useful to educationists and to all others who are interested in the creation of a new 'juster' social order through education.

(Price Rs. 3/- in paper cover, Rs. 3/8- Khadi-bound)

E. W. ARYANAYAKAM
Secretary,
Hindustani Talimi Sangh

HARIJAN

March 6 1949

"SPRINGS OUT OF NON-VIOLENCE"

Shri E. W. Aryanayakam has published a small photo album of *Nai Talim at Sevagram*, with a preface entitled *Education for Life*. One of Gandhiji's utterances quoted in it runs as follows:

> "If we want to eliminate communal and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing our younger generation on the education I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence."

To my mind the last sentence is the key to Gandhiji's all activities and programmes, and should guide us in the conduct of ours.

We have often said that we want to establish a society based on Truth and Non-violence, and that the several items of the Constructive Programme are the means of achieving that ideal. In saying so, we seem to feel that the items of the Constructive Programme, if fully worked out, will make exploitation, inequality and quarrels due to differences of religion, race, position, wealth, etc. impossible and thus there will come into existence a society based on Truth and Non-violence.

The questions which deserve to be considered are: how did Gandhiji himself come to accept Truth and Non-violence as the fundamental principle of his life? How would the charkha and village industries and the removal of untouchability and other things lead to abolition of untruth, violence, exploitation, etc. from society? And how did Gandhiji hit upon these particular items as the means of establishing *Rama Rajya* on earth? How far have regular spinning, using home-spun khadi and village made articles, cleaning latrines, sweeping streets, eating without the observance of caste or creed distinctions, abstaining from intoxicants, and praying regularly, removed or reduced untruth, violence or self-indulgence from us and made our relations with ourselves, our neighbours, colleagues, opponents and others more loving and peaceful than before? Has it not happened sometimes that our very zeal for a particular item of the Constructive Programme made us look at others who are averse to, indifferent or less particular about it, with a certain amount of impatience and contempt? In other words, does the principle of Truth and Non-violence follow from the working out of the Constructive Programme, or does it lead to these various constructive activities?

We have generally imagined that it was the former.

It was not so with Gandhiji. He said that his plan *sprang out of non-violence*. He was an intense devotee of Truth and Non-violence and made relentless effort to co-ordinate his life with this principle. He examined every human institution and act of life as a man of Truth and Non-violence should, and found that he would not be true to that principle if he led a life based on exploitation, inequality, want of equal regard for others' opinions and comforts, non-resistance to evil, or resistance to it with any but truthful and non-violent means and so on. And this led him to the progressive discovery of the various items of the Constructive Programme as also the necessity for India's independence, the aim of *Rama Rajya* (Kingdom of God upon earth) and the various campaigns of his political movements.

Whether it was non-co-operation, acceptance of power, charkha, village industries, untouchability, communal unity, Hindustani, Urdu, education, *go-seva*, or innovations in prayer, each *sprang* out of his non-violence. Even when he resisted some evil, he satisfied himself that the removal of the evil was necessary not only to the party against whom the evil was done, but also in the best interests of the evil-doer himself. Thus he could assert that he resisted British domination and partition not only for India's good but also for the good respectively of the Britons and the Muslims themselves.

There are millions who have a sincere faith in and respect for Gandhiji and his principles and programmes. But there are few who are able to accept all his views and all the items of his Constructive Programme and still fewer who will do anything to work even for an item which they accept. There are also scores among us who have loved and adored Gandhiji, worked with him, developed his various institutions, copied him in several details and have placed implicit faith in him, in his words and in the programmes adumbrated by him. We have also subscribed to the creed of Truth and Non-violence and the rest of his well-known eleven vows. And we have done this honestly and lovingly. Those who possessed money spent thousands of rupees at his command and entertained him and his retinue without heeding the cost or personal inconvenience; others slaved away for him, either to serve him personally or to conduct his institutions. And yet when we examine ourselves we find that we do not seem to feel that throb of Truth and Non-violence, which was self-evident in him in every detail of his life. This want in us leads to constant bickerings within our individual self, as also with our companions. A and B and C all intensely devoted to Gandhiji and his programme and yet none of them able to pull on with one another, and after his death, disintegrating from one another like the physical elements of his dead body! Is not that a travesty of the Constructive Programme and the creed of Truth and Non-violence? Surely there is something wrong in our approach to the whole subject and we must try to find out the defect.

The quotation given in the beginning of this article, I believe, provides the key to the examination. It is the seed which grows into the tree, brings forth the fruit and multiplies into more seeds. So it should be the initial Truth and Non-violence in us that should guide our various

activities whether in private or public life and lead us to this or that activity whether in politics, economics, religion, education, languages, literature, art or any other field, as also whether we should co-operate or non-co-operate, with any person or institution, or resist or tolerate an evil or an opinion to which we do not subscribe or propagate or maintain silence regarding our personal opinions and theories. All large-scale programmes and policies are conclusions, we have arrived at, no doubt on intellectual appreciation of Truth and Non-violence. But what is needed is the actual throb of Truth and Non-violence in every detail of our life and our concrete acts and programmes must result out of that throb, which in turn should get intenser by the reflex current generated from the working out of the Programme.

Our differences will begin to disappear, our programmes will become brighter and we shall rest and work with greater peace with ourselves and our people, if our activities spring from the Non-violence in the throbs of our hearts, rather than from the intellectual manipulation of our brain waves.

Wardha, 23-2-'49 K. G. MASHRUWALA

GANDHIJI AND FUTURE ROLE OF CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

During the first half of December 1947, Gandhiji held a series of talks — one with the Hindustani Talimi Sangh group, the other with members of the Constructive Programme Committee appointed by the Working Committee. The gathering included seasoned soldiers of many a non-violent struggle that Gandhiji had led during the last thirty years of his life. Some of them had been with him from the very beginning of his political career in India. These were practically the last full-length talks that he had with his co-workers and the words of wisdom that dropped from his lips on this occasion have an exceptional significance. They afford a glimpse into the working of his mind on the future role of constructive work in Independent India as he envisaged it and its relation to power politics.

Hitherto non-violence had been used to offer resistance to the alien Government; the problem now was to run the Government. He had made (to him) the terrible discovery that during the struggle for independence, what he had taken to be non-violence was really not non-violence, but passive resistance only — the weapon of the weak, a temporary expedient which could be and was actually discarded by us as soon as there was an opportunity to resort to violence. The conception of non-violence as the weapon of the strong, he saw, must remain a chimera and a dream and non-violence had no future as world power and harbinger of universal peace, unless it could be shown to be capable of retaining and defending the power which it had helped to win; in other words, unless it could successfully act upon and guide power politics. His limited experiment with Gandhi Seva Sangh had brought home the fact that the moment non-violence assumed power, it contradicted itself and became contaminated. The question was whether it could at all be used to influence power politics without succumbing to its corrupting influence, and if so how.

There were some who were worried at the paradox which the Free India Government presented. The Congress had sworn adherence to the constructive programme for years, while it was in the wilderness. But having come into power, it showed signs of giving it the go-by. Was not the remedy for those who had faith in constructive work to enter the Government and use it for the purpose of building up a non-violent social order? Gandhiji was opposed to it, but he held that the purpose could be achieved if the various *Sanghs* which he had founded for carrying on constructive work came up to the standard which he had set to them. As a preparatory step to the discharge of that role, he recommended the unification and co-ordination of those *Sanghs* into one body. He placed the onus of the transformation on the shoulders of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. It should be easy for them to do that if *Nai Talim* was what he had envisaged it to be. What he had proposed was only a part of adult education. "*Nai Talim* is today on its trial. It has either to transform the prevailing atmosphere or perish in the attempt."

He then went on to describe another challenge that confronted *Nai Talim*. It threatened all that we had stood for and fought for all these years. "There is a section in the country today in our midst, which holds that the Hindus and Muslims cannot co-exist, that either the Muslims should get out of Hindustan or live here as the vassals of the Hindus. Similarly, in Pakistan, only the Muslims should remain. It is a poisonous doctrine. In it lies the root of Pakistan. Pakistan has come into being; their dream has vanished but the virus has remained. I have pledged myself to resist this doctrine and this ideology and to do or die in the attempt. But to correct the wrong psychology of the people is really the function of *Nai Talim*."

Being invited to express his opinion, Dr. Zakir Hussainsaheb of the Talimi Sangh said that while in principle what Gandhiji had said was unexceptionable, still there was need to "hasten slowly". Things had changed considerably after independence. Everybody felt the urge and impatience to make new and daring experiments and the need for absolutely a free hand. If the merger resulted in maladjustment, it might retard instead of helping progress.

A suggestion was then made that they might function as separate branches of a tree that have sprung from a common trunk and a reference was made in that connection to the Gandhi Seva Sangh which was described as functioning as the parent trunk at one time. But Gandhiji smelt danger in that. He did not want the Constructive Workers' Organization to be drawn into power politics and become a rival to the Congress or the Government in the contest for political power. "That *Sangh* is no longer there. Nor did it attempt to rally all constructive workers under one organization. It did make a short-lived attempt to enter into and purify

the politics of the country, but had to admit defeat," he said.

Dr. Zakir Hussain next took up the argument.

Dr. Zakir Hussain — "The various *Sanghs* were created separately as *ad hoc* bodies to perform certain specific functions. If they are united into one body, it will not be possible to keep power politics out of it."

Gandhiji — "If the united Constructive Workers' Sangh tries to go into power politics, it would spell its ruin. Or else, why should I myself not have gone into politics and tried to run the Government my way? Those who are holding the reins of power today would easily have stepped aside and made room for me, but whilst they are in charge, they can carry on only according to their lights. But I do not want to take power into my hands. By abjuring power and devoting ourselves to pure, selfless service of the voters, we can guide and influence them. It would give us far more real power than we shall have by going into the Government. A stage may come when the people themselves may feel and say that they want us and no one else to wield the power. The question could then be considered. I shall most probably be not alive then. But when that time comes, the *Sanghs* will produce from amongst them someone who will take over the reins of administration. By that time India shall have become an ideal State."

Dr. Zakir Hussain — "Shall not we need ideal men in order to inaugurate and run the ideal State?"

Gandhiji — "We can send men of our choice, without going into the Government ourselves. Today everybody in the Congress is running after power. That presages grave danger. Let us not be in the same cry as the power-seekers. Today many Congressmen say: 'Pandit Jawaharlal is getting so much salary, why should not we?' They forget that a person of Pandit Jawaharlal's talents could any day have commanded a far greater emolument than he is getting today. If an ordinary humble worker like myself, who neither needs nor has the capacity to earn independently, say Rs. 3,000 p. m., draws that much amount as salary, it is a bad thing. It is my firm view that we should keep altogether aloof from power politics and its contagion."

In the meeting convened by the Constructive Works Committee of the Congress, Acharya Kripalani, Shankarrao Dev and Diwakarji posed to Gandhiji the question whether, if the Congress having captured power, failed to give to constructive work sufficient importance or attention, it would not be better for all constructive workers to form themselves into a separate body for the vigorous prosecution of constructive work. Such a body should not abjure or run away from power either, but go into the Government, take power and use it for the furtherance of the constructive programme. They would thus accomplish in five years what, as a reformatory group outside the Government, they would not be able to do in fifty. Today they were confronted with a paradox. For instance, they praised *gur*, but their Government was sanctioning the erection of new sugar mills. They talked of expanding *khadi* production, but the Provincial Governments were increasing cloth mills. Why was it that the Congress, which had sworn adherence to constructive work, year after year, when it was in the wilderness, was pursuing a halting policy in regard to it now that it had got the power?

Gandhiji — "It is difficult to answer the question — why constructive work is making so little headway, although the Congress has sworn adherence to it for years and men like Jawaharlal, Rajendrababu and Vallabhbhai are at the helm of affairs. All the *Sanghs* except the Harijan Sevak Sangh were brought into being by the Congress. Why is it then that the workers of those *Sanghs* lack the power to make the Government go the whole hog with them? The fault, I suggest, lies with us, the constructive workers. We had faith in constructive work but our faith was not deep or enlightened enough to illumine our intellect and so our growth has been lop-sided. The criticism levelled against the constructive workers is that they are lacking in imagination and intellect. Our intelligentsia are not lacking in sympathy. Reason, as a rule, follows in the footsteps of feeling. But we have not sufficiently penetrated their hearts to convince their reason."

He then went on to describe how constructive work came to be adopted by the Congress as a part of the non-co-operation programme. There was a mass upheaval. People thought it was a good way to fight the British. There was a countrywide awakening. In due course, the intelligentsia too were drawn in. As a result we got 'Independence'. The fight being over, our interest in the constructive programme waned. "The constructive work is not a strategy or a technique of fighting. It connotes a way of life. It can be worked only by men who have adopted it by the heart as well as by the intellect.

"The Congress lent the Constructive Workers' *Sanghs* its name. It gave them the charter to function. But the Congressmen failed to come up to the scratch and shoulder the burden. Such is our bankruptcy. If the *Sanghs* could come together and work under the direction of a jointly chosen representative, it would mark a big step in advance. To set our own house in order is the first indispensable requisite if we want to influence political power. If all the *Sanghs* give a good account of themselves, work unitedly and in co-operation without a jar or jolt, it would be a grand thing. But they must not do it for the sake of popularity or hanker for political power even in their dreams. Soon we shall have adult suffrage. It is a good thing. But to regard adult suffrage as a means for the capture of political power would be to put it to a corrupt use.

"The objective of the Constructive Works Organization is to generate political power. But if we may say that political power having come, it must be ours as a prize for our labours, it would degrade us and spell our ruin. Take the case of the Charkha Sangh. It has the largest membership of all the *Sanghs*. But we have never tried to get its members enrolled on the voters' list. It was suggested at one time that we should get their

names enrolled on the Congress register. I opposed it. 'Do we want to capture the Congress?' I asked them. That would be tantamount to killing it. The Congress can be ours only by right of service. Today we have our own Government. Under adult suffrage, if we are worth our salt, we should have that hold upon the people, that whomsoever we might choose, should be returned. In Sevagram I deprecated the proposal of our people enrolling themselves as voters. What actually happened was that the people from the village came and sought our advice as to whom they should give their vote, because they knew that we were their true servants and had no axe of our own to grind.

"Today politics has become corrupt. Anybody who goes into it is contaminated. Let us keep out of it altogether. Our influence will grow thereby. The greater our inner purity, the greater shall be our hold on the people, without any effort on our part.

"My eyes have now been opened," he continued. "I now see that what we practised during the fight with the British under the name of non-violence, was not really non-violence. God had purposely sealed my eyes as He wanted to accomplish His great purpose through me. That purpose being accomplished, He has restored to me my sight.

"Has what I am doing today penetrated your hearts?" he asked. "Then you should have the strength to remove all corruption wheresoever it may be. You have met here as the constructive wing of the Congress. For that you need not go into any committee. Your work is among the masses. The Constituent Assembly is today forging the constitution. Do not bother about affecting changes in it. Shrimannarayanji has written to me that in the constitution that is being framed, there is no mention of *Gram Panchayat*, whereas Congressmen have always said that the *Gram Panchayat* must be the foundation of our future polity. We have to resuscitate the village, make it prosperous, give it more education, more power. What good will the constitution be if the village does not find its due place in it? What Shrimannarayanji says appeals to me. But we must recognize the fact that the social order of our dreams cannot come through the Congress of today. Nobody knows what shape the constitution will ultimately take. I say, leave it to those who are labouring at it. Let constructive workers consolidate their strength and the way to do it is through the unification of the various constructive works organizations. If we cannot do that, let each *Sangh* continue on its way and develop its strength as best as it can, making intelligence more and more the hall-mark of all its activity. The Charkha Sangh is the biggest *Sangh*. It has funds. It is pursuing the policy of decentralization. I am not unaware of its perils and difficulties. We have to create a superior, more advanced type of *khadi* worker. Not till then shall Samaj Panchayat Raj become a reality. The workers of the Charkha Sangh are not there merely to earn a living for themselves or merely to distribute some wages to spinners, weavers, etc. by way of poor relief. The only goal worthy of their ambition is to create a non-violent order of society. In this they have not made much headway. If our *khadi* workers are there for wages only, then we had better bid goodbye to the dream of realizing a non-violent social order. Success will depend on our uttermost purity. Impatience would be fatal.

"Today most of our workers are drawn from the cities. The really poor villager is haunted by the spectre of destitution. He cannot see beyond the satisfaction of his primary needs. He does not understand *ahimsa*, nor do I talk to him of it, but try only to see that he becomes a good spinner and gets a fair, minimum subsistence wage. I do not mind if the volume of our work is small, so long as it is solid. Constitution-making will be over in a few months. What next? The responsibility of working it and making of it a success will rest on you. Supposing you get a constitution after your heart, but it does not work. After five years, someone will say: 'You had your innings, now give us a chance.' You will have to give in and they may try to seize power, set up a dictatorship and strangulate the Congress. *Per contra*, suppose you do not take power but gain hold on the public, you will be able to return at the polls whomsoever you may wish. Forget membership so long as the voters are in your hand. Think of the root, take care of it as much as you can, make self-purification the sole criterion. Even a handful imbued with this spirit will be able to transform the atmosphere. The people will soon perceive the change and will not be slow to respond to it. Yours is an uphill and difficult task, but it is full of rich promise."

Q. The people are with us, but the Government obstructs our effort. What are we to do?

Gandhiji — If the people are with you, the Government is bound to respond. If it does not, it will be set aside and another installed in its place. Even in the days of Lord Wavell, I used to tell our people that they did not know their own strength or they could get Lord Wavell removed at will. When the British saw that they could rule over us only by martial law, they removed him. It is a tribute to them, for they could very well have imposed martial law.

Q. Should there not be an overall organization which would include and co-ordinate all the *Sanghs'* activities?

Gandhiji — A separate organization is not necessary for the purpose. What is needed is the co-ordination of the work of the *Sanghs*. The various *Sanghs* have so far worked separately and independently of one another. We tried to set up a co-ordinating committee for the purpose of Samagra Gram Seva, but it did not work. If we all unite, we shall function like the departments of the Central Government. The members of the Charkha Sangh will do the work of Gram Udyog too. There is the question of the sale of *tadgur*. Why should

not the Charkha Sangh take it over? Our workers' children have to be educated. Shall we build a separate school for them? Is that not the function of the Talimi Sangh? If we will not co-operate even in such matters, it will show that we have not understood how *ahimsa* works. The central body will lay down the general lines of policy which all the *Sanghs* would follow. If we are determined and pledge ourselves to 'Do or Die', we are bound to succeed.

Aryanayakamji — Let the presidents and secretaries of the various *Sanghs* meet first in a preliminary, informal conference and after discussion, place before Gandhiji the implications and difficulties of unification.

Shankarrao Dev — This is the wrong way to go about it. The workers should meet first. A gathering of the presidents and secretaries will not have the requisite atmosphere. It is a narrow and subjective approach.

Gandhiji — It is neither narrow nor subjective. The workers' conference can follow, not precede. The Charkha Sangh has its Board. Shri Jajuji must consult it first. The average worker will not even understand.

Dev — We have quite a number of intelligent, constructive workers, let them be called.

Gandhiji — We seem to be talking at cross purposes. The discussion that I have proposed involves technical matters. It needs specialists. The general workers will feel themselves at sea in such a discussion. Let the props and pillars unite. All will then feel the glow of strength. Forget me. Dr. Zakir Hussain is a great organizer. He has suggested that nothing should be decided under the spell of my presence just now He has, therefore, recommended that the matter be taken up at Sevagram. I like it. The atmosphere there will be calmer and free from the communal virus. When I came here, I did not know that I would have to speak on these things. I was told that in the constitution committee of the Congress, there were some constructive workers; how could they make their influence felt in the Congress? I had come to tell you that you must not expect to get the constitution you desire through the Congress. Nor need that worry you. It should be enough if the constitution you get does not actually stand in the way of constructive effort. The second thing I had come to tell you was that the various *Sanghs* should become research laboratories in their respective fields. Our constructive works institutions are not democracies; they are instruments for the building up of democracy. The Congress has lent us its name and prestige and in return derives prestige from us for the service which, as its true servants, we render. The connection of the constructive works organizations with the Congress is spiritual. It can be severed at any moment. As specialists, we should be able to tender to the Congress our advice on what needs to be done.

Q. Why cannot we get it done through the Congress?

Gandhiji — Because the Congressmen are not sufficiently interested in constructive work. If they were, it should not have been necessary for us to meet here.

Q. That being the Congress psychology, what is the use of giving place to constructive works' organizations in the Congress constitution?

Gandhiji — Because the constitution moulds the psychology of the people. The people may not do the things they believe, but it should be our duty to see that through our neglect our case does not go by default.

Q. Labour is represented in the Assembly through its representatives. There are special seats reserved for the Universities. Why should not the constructive workers' organizations have functional representatives in the A. I. C. C., who would act in the general way too?

Gandhiji — No, not the mixture. Functional is all right. But in the general there is so much corruption today that it frightens me. Everybody wants to carry so many votes in his pockets, because votes give power. Under adult suffrage anybody who is eligible has a vote. Let all such members of the various *Sanghs* form themselves into one body and let the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. take from among them their nominees, to advise and guide them in matters and policies pertaining to constructive work. There are so many labour organizations in the country. There is the Ahmedabad Labour Union, the Charkha Sangh, the Go-Seva Sangh, the Chamber of Commerce and so on. The Congress claims to represent them all. (The Congress of course claims to represent the Princes too. But I would not ask you to include the Chamber of Princes in your scheme.) Take all the living organizations with you. Purify yourselves of all dross. Banish the very idea of capture of power and you will be able to guide power and keep it on the right path. Therein lies salvation. There is no other way.

Delhi, 8-2-'49 PYARELAL

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